

The last Speech, Confession, and Dying Words,

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JOHN MITCHEL and JOHN JOHNSON,

Who were executed at Carlisle, August 16, 1788, for a Burglary and Felony, in the Dwelling House of Jane Carruthers, at the Island, in the Parish of Abbey-Laner-Cost, in the County of Cumberland.

I, JOHN MITCHEL, about eighteen years of age, born at Ellingham, in Northumberland, of poor but honest parents, who trained me up, as far as they were able, in the paths of virtue and industry; but, as I was of a weakly constitution till about the age of fourteen, they, judging me incapable of hard labour, got me instructed in the art of music; which having led me into company of different complexions, gave me an early inclination to dissipation and vice. I must confess, that pride was the principal cause of my undoing; which operated so strongly upon me, as to make me envy every one whom I thought better dressed than myself. My corrupted nature, led me to commit small thefts, and my not being detected and punished for them, emboldened me to perpetrate greater.

In a word, I acknowledge, that my own wicked heart made me yield to the temptation whenever it offered; and though I was sorry after I had done the crime, yet I afterwards fell into crimes of a similar nature. Disobedience to my parents, and the breach of the Lord's Day, two sins intimately united, were, what I also regret, as the causes of my unhappy fate.

As to the state of my mind, at this present moment, I have reason to bless the Lord, it is such, as one's mind, who has been made sensible of his sins, and of the great mercy of God in Christ, should be.

I, JOHN JOHNSON, aged about twenty-two, born in the parish of Wark, in the county of Northumberland, of honest and industrious parents, who bound me an apprentice to John Moore, cooper, in Sunderland, for five years; during which time, I maintained a good character. When out of my time, I went to sea for two years. About twelve months before my confinement in this goal I fell into company with one Jane Gregg, who has been the wicked instrument of bringing seven men to the same shameful death I am about now to suffer. This woman, by her base insinuations, led me astray: My wife, the sister of my fellow-prisoner, and to whom I had been married more than a year before, apprized me of my danger, and predicted my end. Turning a deaf ear to her admonitions, I not only rejected the same, but treated her with cruelty, which gives me the most heart-felt grief. I have that to lament, that, being initiated into dishonest ways, I was the cause of leading my fellow-sufferer astray.—I confess, that, in company with Isaac Miller, (the supposed husband of Jane Gregg), who lately suffered the same fate that now awaits me, I robbed the woman's house, who came to the goal to see if she could discover among the prisoners, the person or persons who did it.

My inward feelings are such as become one who has been guilty of many crimes, but who nevertheless hopes for mercy through the merits of Christ. God has thought fit to stop me in my sinful career; had he not done so, the Devil, and my wicked heart, had me so much in leading, that I might have been guilty of still greater crimes. During the first eight days after my sentence, the fear of dying was uppermost in my mind; but, by the good instructions I have received, my future state has, since that time, employed most of my intention. And though the fear of an hereafter clouds my faith, yet my reliance for salvation is entirely upon Christ.

We, as dying men, acknowledge ourselves guilty of the crime for which we suffer, but with this variation from the evidence given by the prosecutrix, that J. Johnson, and not J. Mitchel, rifled the house; and that J. Mitchel, and not J. Johnson, stood over her in the bed; and that both the cuffs of the dark chintz gown were in our possession when her property were found upon us.

We hope, that none shall be so cruel, and so void of the spirit of Christianity, as to upbraid any of our surviving relations with our unhappy end. We forgive our prosecutrix, the Jury who found us guilty, the Judge who passed the sentence, and all who have been any way instrumental in bringing us to the fatal tree. We return our most thankful acknowledgments to the Rev. Messrs. Harrison, Hill, and Thomson, for their very great attention to us. We hope that their pious instructions have been of benefit to our souls. May the Lord bless their persons, their families, and their labours! We also gratefully acknowledge the humane treatment we have received from Mr Mullander, the jailer, during the time we have been in confinement.

We hope, that all, especially those who are young, that see, or may hear of our shameful exit from the world, may take warning to shun the destructive paths of vice, and betake themselves to the practice of those duties which promote the welfare of society, and mark the disciples of Christ.

Now,—bidding an eternal farewell to the world, and all that we hold dear in it, we launch into Eternity! trusting in the righteousness of Christ, hoping that, through his satisfaction, we shall obtain “the forgiveness of all our sins, and an inheritance amongst those that are sanctified.”

This our last Confession and Declaration, we make in the presence of the Rev. Mr. Hill, the Rev. Mr. Thomson, and Mr. MULLANDER Jailor: Therefore, if any other appear, it must be spurious.

Carlisle Gaol, August 15th, 1788.